



# CONNECTIONS

Office of Public Transit Newsletter • September 2004

## Federal funding for transportation awaiting Congressional action

**C**ongress and the White House have had difficulty agreeing on what the future funding levels for all types of transportation should be. Even though each house of Congress has passed its own version of a bill reauthorizing federal transportation programs and funding, they've been unable to reach any kind of agreement. As a result they recently passed a sixth extension of the authorizing bill that was initially set to expire in September of 2003. The most recent extension authorizes the programs through May 31, 2005, unless agreement can be reached on a new reauthorization bill before that.

There is no agreement on appropriations either. The nation entered the new federal fiscal year October 1 with all domestic programs dependent on a 51-day continuing resolution, which will fund programs at last year's levels through November 20<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully by that date Congress will have returned from their election

break and acted on appropriations. Most observers anticipate that all domestic spending will be lumped into a single omnibus appropriations bill.

The inability to reach agreement on a new authorization has left transit with funding frozen at the FY2003 levels, even though federal gas tax revenues are up and each house of Congress has passed a bill that would authorize these revenues to be paid out in the form of funding increases. The repeated short extensions add to the uncertainty. Iowa's large urban systems are impacted most, since they depend on the new appropriation to cover the costs of services back to July 1 of this year. Small urban and regional transit systems have somewhat of a buffer, since the state allocates their federal funding for the following state fiscal year, beginning next July 1.

## IN THIS ISSUE...

- 2 Director's Column
- 2 DOT reports results of STA formula review
- 3 Cooperative efforts save lives
- 3 Environmental Initiatives - Part 4
- 4 Intercity bus route restructuring
- 5 New service providers in southeastern Iowa
- 6 Donna Johnson is Talking Transit
- 7 IPTA announces 2005 legislative initiatives
- 7 Iowa State Fair shuttle ridership sees significant increase
- 8 River Bend Transit to receive national award
- 9 Region XII COG receives Public Service Award
- 9 Transit Spotlight - Pam Ward, Ottumwa Transit Authority
- 10 Transit Spotlight - MLK Jr. Transportation Center
- 10 Who's Who in Iowa Transit - Karen Wilcox, Muscabus
- 12 Affordable transportation around the clock
- 12 DHHS test standards may soon affect transit
- 13 City of Bettendorf upgrades fleet
- 14 Vilsack's fifth annual "Walk Iowa"
- 14 Transit training library
- 15 2004 - 2005 Calendar

## Director's Column

By Michelle McEnany

The Modal Division has a new employee! Bob Krause has joined the division and is already proving to be a valuable asset to the Office of Public Transit (OPT). Bob has a strong and varied background in transportation. He has been with the Iowa DOT since 1996, and has served as Transportation Planner in both Northeast and Southeast Iowa. Prior to that he was Transit Director at Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments in Waterloo.

Bob has been assigned to take on the transportation coordination effort described in Chapter 324A of the Iowa Code. He will work with Iowa's Transportation Coordination Council to bring the appropriate state agencies together to develop an action plan for making progress in the coordination of transportation services between agencies and areas. He will also work with federal agencies on a related multi-agency initiative called "United We Ride," integrating efforts with the state level Transportation Coordination Council as appropriate.

In addition to Bob's coordination responsibilities, he will be dedicated to providing legislative support by reviewing, analyzing and making recommendations on state and federal regulations and legislation. His extensive

experience in this area includes: serving for six years as a state legislator (1973-1979), chairing the House Transportation Committee for four years (Bob sat on the committee that created the Iowa DOT and was named by the Des Moines Register as one of the top 10 most effective legislators), serving as Midwest Regional Representative for the U.S. Secretary of Transportation during the Carter administration, heading up a think-tank in transportation policy for the Council of State Governments, and also serving as a retired lieutenant colonel in the Transportation Corps, U.S. Army Reserve. This background should serve him well in his new responsibilities.

Bob is already beginning to acclimate to his new job. In fact, he is stepping up to help out with our new statewide Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) project. Many of you already know that over the last few years our office and Iowa's rural transit systems have been pursuing an initiative to deploy ITS technologies. After receiving congressionally earmarked federal funding for this purpose, TranSystems Corporation was selected to conduct a study to determine the need for these technologies among Iowa's regional and small urban transit systems, and to recommend a plan for deployment. TranSystems Corporation prepared individual agency technology plans for



Bob Krause

the transit systems that had indicated they were committed to moving forward with the recommended deployments.

In the May issue of our newsletter we announced that four proposals had been received and were being reviewed by an evaluation committee comprised of participating transit agencies and OPT staff, with assistance from TranSystems Corporation and other Iowa DOT offices. That review has now been completed and the firm of RouteMatch Software has been awarded a contract to proceed with the deployment of ITS technologies.

The first transit systems moving forward with this project are River Bend Transit which is based in Davenport, and RIDES which is headquartered in Spencer. We are happy to announce that Bob has issued contracts with each of these agencies to allow this project to continue to move forward.

Please join me in welcoming Bob Krause to the Modal Division. If you need to contact him he can be reached at 515-239-1132 or [robert.krause@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:robert.krause@dot.iowa.gov).

*Michelle*

## DOT reports results of committee review of STA formula

At the September meeting of the Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA), staff from the Iowa DOT's Office of Public Transit discussed the results of a yearlong review of the state's formula for distribution of state transit assistance (STA) funding. An advisory committee, representing the different groupings of transit systems, met with OPT staff and considered how well the formula supports the state's mission for public transit and whether any change should be recommended.

The current STA distribution formula was originally adopted in 1981 and was modified slightly in 1989 after a similar review. The current formula divides funding between regional and urban transit systems based on each group's share of the total revenue miles of service in the state. Within each group, individual allocations are based 25% on each system's relative efficiency in terms of cost per ride, 25% on each system's relative efficiency based on cost per mile, and 50% based on each system's relative level of local financial support.

The committee looked at historic trends in STA funding for systems and in the relative performance of each peer group of transit systems. They also considered each group's relative access to federal funding and how that might affect their ability to serve the

**STA formula**, SEE page 13

## Cooperative efforts save lives

**T**ransit systems and fire departments throughout the state work cooperatively in routinely reviewing and practicing standard emergency operating procedures. Transit vehicle drivers are taught such things as: how to release the air pressure valve that holds the door closed by using a simple safety relief valve above the door; operating the handles for the emergency egress windows; proper use of seat

belt cutters, FM two-way radios, on-board fire extinguishers; and, if all else fails, how to use the fire extinguisher unit itself to break a window.

On rare occasions drivers are put to the test of putting into practice everything they have been taught about emergency evacuations and the safety features of the buses they operate. This was the case last March for a 16-year veteran bus driver right

here in Iowa, although it could have happened anywhere. The driver apparently panicked when black smoke started coming out of the engine compartment of the bus she was driving. Even if the bus's engine and electrical system are down and the door doesn't work, the driver can use the safety relief valve above the door to open it and escape. In her panic, the driver forgot about this safety feature. There were no passengers on board, but she still needed to find a way out for herself. She did attempt to escape using the egress windows but again, in her panic, did not pull the handles far enough to release them.

The driver then used her cell phone to summon help. Passing motorists spotted the smoking bus and pulled over to help. A police officer hit the passenger-side exit window with his baton a couple of times but it didn't completely break out. That's when he used his forearm and elbow; the bottom half of the window shattered right through, according to the officer, and then he punched it with his fist to enlarge the escape route. A passerby brought over a hammer and the officer and other rescuers helped the driver escape uninjured. The police officer received minor cuts to his arm after smashing laminated safety glass with his elbow in an effort to rescue the driver. If the driver hadn't panicked, she may have remembered that she could have used the fire extinguisher unit to break a window and escape. Firefighters were able

to quickly put out the fire, which appeared to have started in the engine compartment.

Rare emergencies like this incident reinforce the need for practice and refresher training. These and other measures can be helpful in reducing driver anxiety and avoiding panic. At times, older, non-working buses are used in a controlled-fire setting to provide firefighters with practice in putting out fires on a bus, as if it were an actual emergency situation. Just this month, the Office of Public Transit approved a request from an Iowa public transit system to use a bus slated for disposal for emergency extrication training. These are both good uses of older, high mileage vehicles that have met or exceeded their replacement threshold. It provides an opportunity for emergency personnel to gain first-hand experience with the buses, in addition to their general training programs.

Training is also available for bus operators in emergency procedures, escape routes, proper use of emergency exit windows and escape hatches, calling 911 or dispatch, and providing assistance to passengers. Safety continues to be a top priority in public transit.

## Iowa Transit Systems' Environmental Initiatives

### Part four

**O**ver the past year, we have been sharing information concerning environmental initiatives in Iowa. In our first article we mentioned that Iowa's 35 transit agencies began using gasohol in most of the statewide gas-fueled transit vehicle fleet even prior to enactment of Senate File 545 in 1991. Our second article concentrated on biodiesel as an alternate fuel source. At that time RIDES, a regional transit system based in Spencer, was making trial use of B2 biodiesel fuel in a service vehicle. RIDES fleet maintenance manager, Todd Rohwer, reports "...we have expanded our use of B2 to seven vehicles now. Doing so may explain why none of these vehicles has exhibited any problems related to fuel injector fouling and will extend engine life." Currently, five transit systems are continuing to use a soybean product (methyl soyate) blended with conventional non-renewable diesel fuel. Presently, both crude oil and methyl soyate prices are subject to wide fluctuation. As such, these five transit managers continue to assess whether using a 2 percent (B2), 5 percent (B5), 10 percent (B10), or 20 percent (B20) methyl soyate biodiesel should be the blend to order next.

Use of electric and hybrid diesel electric powered buses as well as other alternate fuels, such as liquid propane and compressed natural gas, was the topic for our last article. It was noted that gas fueled buses could be converted to propane use in the event that gasoline prices increase markedly. But, since most of Iowa's gas powered buses are newer with low emission engines and are used predominantly in rural areas, the intended benefits of reduced emissions might be difficult to achieve since most buses would have to be driven more miles to reach fueling

[Environmental initiatives](#), see page 11

## Smaller, private bus companies unite to provide an integrated and seamless scheduled intercity bus system

**B**urlington Trailways and Jefferson Lines quickly worked together to provide continuity of service to rural Iowans and reduce the impact of Greyhound Lines, Inc.'s recent route restructuring. The impact of Greyhound's decision to abandon fourteen Iowa stops as of August 17 is barely noticeable now that these two smaller, independently owned bus companies have been able to add new routes or restructure current routes, providing service to nearly all of the 14 Iowa communities.

When Greyhound, based in Dallas, Texas, originally announced their restructuring back in June, there was a question whether there would be any intercity bus service along their routes which had been serving the following Iowa communities: Ames, Anita, Dubuque, Dyersville, Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown, Newton, Onawa, Shenandoah, Sioux Center, Sioux City, Tama/Toledo, Walcott, and Waterloo. Greyhound's remaining Iowa route has been reworked in an effort to still provide the same or increased service. They anticipate customers will have a safe, enjoyable, and affordable travel experience with improved convenience, faster service, fewer stops and improved performance. Greyhound Bus Lines is the only carrier to offer nationwide service to the lower 48 states of the United States. They have said they understand the important role that intercity bus service plays in rural areas but due to declining ridership and revenues,

**"The traveling public will now have more options and enhanced service to Iowa communities."**

**Michelle McEnany,  
director of Iowa DOT's Office of Public Transit.**

and increased insurance costs, the company set its course for restructuring service. Greyhound will now concentrate its service in Iowa along Interstate 80, serving Davenport, Iowa City, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs.

Burlington Trailways, a family owned and operated corporation that provides transportation services to people and various business entities in their market area, implemented a new route between Des Moines and Chicago effective the day after Greyhound discontinued service in many of these same areas. The route will serve the Iowa communities of Des Moines, Ames, Marshalltown, Tama/Toledo, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Dyersville, and Dubuque, prior to heading into Chicago via Rockford, IL. Connectivity is provided in Ames and Des Moines with Jefferson Lines and other Burlington Trailways schedules, and with the entire intercity system in Chicago. This move by Burlington Trailways resulted in no interruption of service for many people in rural Iowa. Additionally, Burlington Trailways has extended a route that previously stopped in Omaha, NE, to continue traveling through to Denver,

CO providing an outlet for west-bound passenger traffic. They also added a stop in Anita on this same route.

Burlington Trailways, headquartered in West Burlington, Iowa, is committed to serving and providing connecting service to rural communities in the six states where they currently offer scheduled service. Burlington Trailways currently stops in Keokuk, Fort Madison, Burlington, Mediapolis, Wapello, Muscatine, Davenport, Mount Pleasant, Iowa City, Fairfield, Ottumwa, Knoxville, Anita, and Council Bluffs in addition to the eight mentioned above, for a total of 22 Iowa stops.

The intention of Burlington Trailways realigned service is to enhance intercity bus transportation for the general public into and out of the Greyhound terminals in St. Louis, MO, Chicago, IL, Denver, CO, Indianapolis, IN, Omaha, NE, and Des Moines, IA. "The traveling public will now have more options and enhanced service to Iowa communities," said Michelle McEnany, director of Iowa DOT's Office of Public Transit.

Jefferson Lines, based in Minneapolis, MN, also added a new route through Iowa to help reduce the impact of

Greyhound's western Iowa abandonments. The new Jefferson Lines route will now offer service from Kansas City, MO, to Sioux Falls, SD, with stops in Clarinda, Shenandoah, Emerson, Council Bluffs, Onawa, and Sioux City.

Jefferson Lines has operated rural intercity service in the Midwest since 1919. It is a third generation, family-owned business. Over the years, the Jefferson system has expanded to serve eleven states and Manitoba, Canada.

Jefferson Lines has two other, previously established, north/south routes through Iowa. The most western route enters Iowa on Iowa 9 with stops in Larchwood and Rock Rapids, then travels south on U.S. 75 with stops in Sioux Center, LeMars, and Sioux City where it switches to Interstate 29, stopping in Onawa, then continuing south with a final Iowa stop in Council Bluffs. Its central Iowa route travels south along Interstate 35, with stops at the Mason City airport; "Dudley's Corner," a pick-up point near Hampton; "Boondocks" truck stop; Ames; Des Moines; Osceola; and Lamoni. Their night schedule makes an additional stop, Clear Lake.

Dodger Area Rapid Transit (DART) operates intercity bus service from its home base in Fort Dodge to Webster City, then to the "Boondocks" truck stop at I-35 and old Hwy. 20,

**Route restructuring,  
see next page**

## Route restructuring, from previous page

to make a connection to Jefferson Lines. DART is also a ticketing agent for Jefferson Lines. DART provides this service under Mid-Iowa Development Association's (MIDAS) authority. MIDAS is the rural transit provider also based in Fort Dodge. This feeder-service has been provided for several years and has been a win-win situation for DART and the citizens of northwest Iowa.

A smaller carrier, Five Oaks Buses, recently dropped their routes between Newton and Des Moines and between Indianola and Des Moines. No other carrier has stepped in to redeem this service. However, at least one transit system is looking into the viability of offering this service.

"OPT takes an active role in education and advocacy efforts to promote the vital role public transportation plays in Iowa and connecting Iowa to other parts of the country through the intercity bus system. We are pleased that virtually seamless service was able to be maintained by private operators working together for the good of all Iowans," said McEnany.

For more information about Burlington Trailways call 800-992-4618; for Jefferson Lines call 888-864-2832, and for DART call 515-573-8145. Specific Iowa Transportation Information can also be obtained by calling the Iowa Rural Connection 888-864-2832.

## New service providers in southeastern Iowa

The four southeastern counties of Des Moines, Henry, Louisa, and Lee have new transit service providers as of July 1, 2004. Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC), based in Burlington, was selected by Des Moines, Henry and Louisa counties as their service provider. Lee County selected Ten-Fifteen Regional Transit, based in Ottumwa.

The changes came about after the announcement in April by Community Action of Southeast Iowa that it would cease service on June 30, 2004. This group was the service provider for the four-county area for many years. In a June meeting attended by all parties, the vehicle fleet was divided between the two new providers for the area. Eight vehicles were selected to be transferred to SEIRPC,

with the remaining four going to Ten-Fifteen Regional Transit. Additionally, SEIRPC was provided funding to purchase two vehicles from Community Action that had originally been purchased with local funds. SEIRPC also purchased three used vehicles from another transit agency and received a standard van donated by Henry County. In the next several months SEIRPC will be replacing two old buses with two new ones.

OPT would like to welcome SEIRPC as an Iowa transit provider and wishes them success in this newly added program. Brian Tapp is SEIRPC's executive director. Mike Hurley, who was the transit director at Community Action, will be continuing in this capacity for SEIRPC. Five drivers who previously worked for Community Action are now driving for SEIRPC. Pam Ward, Ten-Fifteen Regional Transit's executive director, is a familiar face to many of our readers. We also wish Pam success in adding Lee County to her previous 10-county service area.

## Did you know?

### "Spin to Win" wheel used as part of OPT/ MTA marketing booth to promote public transit statewide at the Iowa State Fair

Drive carefully - - school is open! Did you know that Iowa taxpayers save more than \$1 million annually through the coordination of public transit and public school transportation? Public transit serves all 99 Iowa counties and provides more than 23 million rides each year. If you visited the DOT's Office of Public Transit and Des Moines MTA booth at the Varied Industries Building this summer you would have also learned that more than five million gallons of gas are saved every year by vanpoolers. Have you ridden public transit lately?





## Donna Johnson is Talking Transit

Our booth emphasized transit's history, with a timeline detailing public

transit, intercity buses and passenger rail services on a display titled "From Buggies to Buses. Wherever Life Takes You... Ride With Us!" MTA carried the historic theme through to their display and then expanded on the benefits of public transit: Mobility, Freedom, Accessibility, and Opportunity. A game with a large, colorful spinning wheel was used for adults and children alike who could come in and spin to receive a small promotional gift while learning a bit of transit trivia. You will notice those bits of trivia information throughout this newsletter.

**W**here were you Aug. 12-22? Were you one of the estimated 1,051,800 attendees at the Iowa State Fair this year? A favorite building for many fair-goers is the William C. Knapp Varied Industries Building. Exhibitors have an opportunity to showcase many Iowa products and services in this building, and Public Transit was right there in the midst of it all.

The public transit booth was co-sponsored this year by our Office of Public Transit (OPT) and the Des Moines Metro Transit Authority (MTA).

All in all, many people stopped by the booth, spun the wheel or read the historic timelines. Thousands of brochures, marketing items and Iowa maps were handed out over the 11 days. The brochure was created especially for this event, with historic photos on the cover and brief timeline information inside. Also included was a map showing all 35 Iowa public transit systems, the regional boundaries, current intercity bus routes and Iowa stops, commercial airport facilities, and Amtrak stops. Contact information for each Iowa transit system and intercity bus carrier was also included. Our Web site address was placed on each marketing item in hopes that some folks will look up their local transit provider on the Internet to find out more specific information about the services available to them.

We would like to thank each person that volunteered to staff the booth, carry boxes, design the display, print materials or help out in any other way. It really takes a lot of people willing to help to be able to promote public transit at an event as large as the Iowa State Fair. A thank you also goes out to those fair-goers that stopped by our booth. We hope you learned something about public transit and if you aren't already riding public transit, consider giving it a try sometime soon. Remember, all 99 counties in Iowa are served by public transportation.

Other efforts are underway to help promote public transit around the state. Presentations have been made to: the Older Iowan Drivers Conference in Davenport (May), the

[Talking Transit](#), see next page



The night before the fair opens, all is quiet. The historic timeline of public transit and intercity bus service is displayed on the left side of the OPT/MTA marketing booth. The booth is ready for its first customer.



Des Moines MTA's Marketing Director, Kirsten Baer-Harding, hands a transit coloring book to a child visiting the transit booth at the Iowa State Fair.

## Talking Transit, from previous page

Fort Dodge Rotary Club (June), the Ames Golden K Kiwanis (September) and the League of Cities conference hosted in Sioux City (September). Presentations or booths are also in the works for the Elder Rights conference to be held in downtown Des Moines in October, the Iowa Association of Counties annual meeting in Des Moines this fall, and the Des Moines chapter of the National Federation of the Blind November meeting. Each of these venues offers an opportunity to provide educational materials and advocate for public transit at the local level.

Along these same lines, OPT has been working with the DOT's Office of Driver Services (ODS) in a cooperative effort to create educational materials for distribution to drivers who may choose to use public transit for some of their needs as they adjust to safe mobility challenges that come with aging. That information was handed out at the Older Iowan Drivers Conference in May and will be used by the ODS at future conferences.

If you are aware of other groups that may be interested in a public transit presentation, please let me know. OPT is taking advantage of every opportunity to help promote public transit around the state.



OPT's table top display used at the Older Iowan Drivers Conference held in Davenport.

## IPTA announces 2005 legislative initiatives

Mark Munson, Iowa Public Transit Association's (IPTA) legislative chair and transit manager for the City of Dubuque's transit system, Keyline Transit, shared legislative goals as recommended by IPTA's legislative committee during a presentation at the Association's legislative planning workshop on September 29 in Ames.

Munson laid out the Association's legislative committee goals and strategy to help meet the goals. For 2005, IPTA is focusing on clear and measurable objectives with scheduled milestones. One of the first milestones was to assess the FY2004 initiatives and adjust the FY2005 initiatives accordingly.

At the federal level, IPTA will be focusing on the passage of legislation reauthorizing the federal transportation programs including those for public transit, as well as identifying capital needs and policy priorities. The group plans to develop a presentation of priorities to take along with them when representatives of the organization meet

with legislators in Washington D.C. early next year and for IPTA's legislative day at the State Capitol.

IPTA's top three federal objectives are:

- Passage of \$300 billion reauthorization prior to elections,
- Increased bus and bus facility funding for Iowa, and
- Relief from specific regulatory provisions within the Head Start, Medicaid, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs.

On the state side, IPTA plans to reinforce the message conveyed to legislators last session regarding state transit assistance. Munson encouraged IPTA members to develop and nurture relationships with local area legislators and sustain that contact on an on-going basis. IPTA's state objectives are:

- Continued State Transit Assistance funding as established by Iowa Code,
- Recognition of transit managers and IPTA in Des Moines area by legislators, and
- Local press recognition of

IPTA, see page 14

## Iowa State Fair shuttle ridership exceeds all expectations

Ridership on the state fair shuttle, operated by Des Moines Metro Transit Authority (MTA), was up by more than 36 percent this year. During the course of the fair, Sheri Kyras, MTA's assistant general manager, said that it looked like ridership would exceed 100,000. When the performance report

came in, it showed 113,555 rode the shuttle; a significant increase over the 83,280 rides reported the previous year. Kyras was excited that the increase in ridership was much higher than expected.

The #1, WDM/Fairgrounds route also experienced a 39 percent increase in ridership over the course of the fair. This is one of MTA's regular routes

that provides bus service between the city of West Des Moines and the fairgrounds.

Many fairgoers stopping by the DOT's Office of Public Transit and Des Moines MTA booth at the Varied Industries Building had either already ridden the shuttle or obtained information about riding the bus for their return trip to the fair. They also learned that

most public transit buses are equipped with ramps or lifts for ease of boarding with mobility aid devices.

The 2005 fair is set for Aug. 11-21. With parking costs on or near the fairgrounds ranging from about \$5 - \$10 per car, the Des Moines MTA anticipates continued growth in shuttle ridership.



## River Bend Transit to receive national award

**C**ongratulations go out to River Bend Transit, the 2004 recipient of the FTA Administrator's Award for Outstanding Public Service in Rural Public Transportation. Past recipients consider it a huge honor to receive this award. Nominations are submitted throughout the United States and recipients are selected based on their accomplishments by an impartial board. The standards are very high and transit systems around the country consider this award the "best of the best".

The award will be presented at the Transportation Research Board's 16<sup>th</sup> Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference on October 25 in Roanoke, Virginia. Randy Zobrist, River Bend Transit's (RBT) executive director, will be accepting the award on behalf of the transit system. RBT will be receiving the award, in part, based on their coordination efforts with the Quad Cities urban transit systems, in getting ADA paratransit services up and running, as well as their success in providing special employment transportation services for low income persons. RBT is currently scheduled to be among the first rural transit systems in Iowa to begin deployment of advanced transit technologies under Iowa's statewide rural transit Intelligent Transportation Systems this summer.

RBT, headquartered in Davenport, serves the rural portions of Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott counties in eastern Iowa, including two small cities with urban transit systems (Clinton and Muscatine), as well as the Iowa portion of the Quad Cities metropolitan area, where the cities of Bettendorf and Davenport each operate large urban transit systems.

RBT, formerly known as Great River Bend Services, Inc., was Iowa's first consolidated regional transit system and provides general public transportation services throughout the four counties, as well as trips to medical and shopping facilities in Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and the Illinois Quad Cities.

Additionally, RBT has been the recipient of Iowa DOT's "Most Improved Transit System of the Year" award four times, and the "Most Innovative Transit Service" once.

This is the second consecutive time an Iowa transit system has been the recipient of the FTA's Administrator's Award for Outstanding Public Service. At the last rural transit conference two years ago, Ottumwa Transit Authority, which also manages the Ten-Fifteen Regional Transit system in southern Iowa, was a recipient and was represented by Pam Ward, transit administrator.



Randy Zobrist, Executive Director, River Bend Transit



River Bend Transit's dispatchers coordinate requests for rides throughout its service area. RBT's coordination efforts with the Quad Cities area urban transit systems played a part in RBT being selected for the FTA Administrator's Award for Outstanding Public Service in Rural Transportation.



(Left to right) Chris Whitaker, Transportation Planner; Kevin Kettleon, Economic Development Planner; Joe Behrens, Local Assistance Director; Rick Hunsaker, Executive Director; Sheryl Banasik, Regional Planner; and Jim Burns, Transit Director.

## Region XII COG receives Public Service Award

The Carroll Chamber of Commerce awarded Region XII Council of Governments (COG) a Public Service Award in February 2003 at the chamber's annual banquet. Yes, that was last year, but with the distribution cycle of our newsletter, the timing didn't coincide with our schedule and somehow it got overlooked. For that, we apologize. We still want to give special recognition to the COG in our newsletter as the recipient of this special award and for its support of the public transit program.

The COG was only the second organization to be recognized with the Public Service award since it is traditionally given to an individual. In presenting the award, former Lt. Governor and Carroll Mayor Art Neu said the staff has worked beyond the usual efforts expected of such an agency. He added, "I

think Region XII represents government at its best." Neu ran through a litany of services provided and projects with which the COG assists, including the public transit system. Neu highlighted the role of transit in providing access to medical services, serving persons with disabilities, being an asset to the elderly in the county, and improving the quality of life of transit-dependent persons.

Barry Bruner, a Carroll attorney and emcee for the banquet, commented that he had first-hand experience with the COG from its work with the depot preservation project (a TEA-21 recipient). "They are successful because they do it the old fashioned way. They just work hard and they get the job done. There really is nothing you can't take to them which they won't point you in the right direction."

## Transit Spotlight

Ward featured in national TRB publication

The Transportation Research Board of the National Academies featured Pam Ward and the Ottumwa Transit Authority (OTA) in its TR News July-August 2004 publication.

The article stressed that coordination efforts have been a major part of Ward's career and quoted her as saying, "In a rural area, it's all about forming partnerships to identify the customers' needs that must be met. The value of rural public transportation cannot be underestimated." Ward would know, having worked in the field of public transit for 30 years serving a town (Ottumwa) with a population of 25,000, the largest within a 75-mile radius in southeast Iowa.

Ward has worked with the TRB standing committees and Transit Cooperative Research Program panels, and has been a member and past chair of the Rural Public and Intercity Bus Committee. For many years she has been accessing TRB's written research to learn about best practices, emerging trends and challenges on the horizon. Ward says that TRB is a forum for meeting researchers and learning first-hand about their work. "Research helps us identify the challenges our bus operators face, including the safety of passengers, driver fatigue, and dealing with difficult situations," said Ward.

The Board of Transit Trustees for OTA and Ten-Fifteen Regional Transit, another transit system Ward manages serving 11 southeastern Iowa counties, is said



"In a rural area, it's all about forming partnerships to identify the customers' needs that must be met."

**Pam Ward**  
Ottumwa Transit Authority

to constantly challenge the staff to reach beyond current service levels to meet the customers' needs, all the while keeping a focus on efficiency and limited resources. Ward says, "As a staff, we continue to try to find better ways of meeting those needs using technologies, additional partners, and resources not previously tapped".

OTA received the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Public Service Award in 2002 and the FTA Region 7 Special Achievement Award in 2004. Iowa DOT has recognized the regional transit system Ward manages three times as the "Most Improved Transit System of the Year". Congratulations Pam on each of your accomplishments!

## Transit Spotlight



### Martin Luther King Jr. Transportation Center receives national attention

**T**he Martin Luther King Jr. Transportation Center in downtown Sioux City recently won a national design award and is receiving lots of national exposure for its innovative features.

Clark Ennerson Partners designed the structure, collaborating with Carl Walker Inc. on the structural engineering aspects. Color photographs of the King Center are included on brochures distributed nationwide by both firms. The publications note that the building's design received an honorable mention in the 2004 International Parking Institute Award for Excellence competition.

Dan Jensen, Sioux City Transit's General Manager, was instrumental in securing special federal funds for this project. "This facility's architectural success would not have been possible without the focused cooperation between Iowa's Congressional delegation, state transportation officials and concerted action by local elected officials," said Jensen. The \$11.6 million transportation center was built with a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) discretionary grant augmented by federal Intercity Bus Assistance funding and Amoco Loan Assistance administered by the DOT's Office of Public Transit.

The Carl Walker Inc. brochure states that "The design of this transportation center hinged upon creating a facility that integrated itself into the fabric of its surroundings. The facility is located among many buildings of high architectural caliber." Jensen says the King Center is surrounded by five historic buildings, four of which are currently on the National Register and one that is said to be eligible for listing. The brickwork, precise concrete colors and details of the transportation center were selected and designed to integrate with the surrounding buildings.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Transportation Center is located in the 500 block of Nebraska Street and features a street level joint lobby for the Sioux City Transit System and an intercity bus carrier, Jefferson Bus Lines. Taxicab stands and bicycle racks are located directly outside the main entrance. There are four levels of parking, with enough space for 478 vehicles on the upper floors. Open retail space is still available and connections will be built for future skywalks to nearby buildings.

## Who's Who in Iowa Transit

### Wilcox retires

**K**aren Wilcox, Transit Manager with the city of Muscatine's MuscaBus, retired on Sept. 30. During her nearly four-and-a-half year service she oversaw the purchase of four new buses and successful continuation of the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) service. MuscaBus was one of the first recipients of a JARC contract which benefits approximately 80 individuals and yields more than 5,000 rides per year, providing service between 5:30 p.m. and midnight, six days a week.

Prior to heading up MuscaBus, Karen was the Operations Manager for ten years at River Bend Transit, formerly Great River Bend Services, based in Davenport. Karen has been a very active person in her community and says that, "It seems I have been in transit most of my working life and have no regrets as to the paths it has taken me down. I am looking forward to retirement, and

starting to recreate a new life is very exciting." Part of that new life is her recent marriage. Karen was married on Sept. 4 and will be moving back to the Quad Cities area at the end of the month. She is also looking into volunteering some of her time to a local shelter for battered women and children. For those who know Karen, you will recall that she loves to travel. We all wish Karen a long and happy retirement as she continues to travel the world.

Karen was honored with a certificate of appreciation by OPT and also by the Iowa Public Transit Association at its legislative meeting held in Ames on September 29. With Karen's departure, the city of Muscatine has announced that Ann Harrison will be the new Transit Manager at MuscaBus. Ann has worked there as transit dispatcher and dispatch coordinator for the past 20 years. We welcome Ann to Iowa's transit family.



Samil Sermet congratulates Karen Wilcox (right), Muscabus Transit Manager, on her retirement and presents her with a service award from DOT's Office of Public Transit.

## Environmental initiatives, from page 3

sites. Associated costs for CNG fueled heavy-duty buses, including higher insurance premiums, make this option cost prohibitive for Iowa's transit systems to consider as a means of reducing emissions.

This final article provides an overview of ancillary vehicle equipment and other measures being used by Iowa's transit managers to reduce non-renewable fuel use, exhaust emissions and drive train wear.

The most significant ancillary equipment adopted by an Iowa public transit system to reduce emissions, fuel use and drive train wear is an electronic, programmable fuel flow control that is used on all of Cedar Rapids' FST&P's diesel buses. This programmable fuel flow control utilizes tailpipe emissions data to reduce fuel usage as the bus engine ages. The reduced fuel usage is one reason why the FST&P fleet's emissions average remains low. The use of hydrous ethanol injection and biodiesel — simultaneously — replaces a significant amount of the conventional petroleum-based diesel fuel and achieves greater emission benefits than is achieved using either of these renewable agriculture co-products alone.

The electronic, programmable fuel flow control device in use by Cedar Rapids is one of the most sophisticated measures being used in Iowa to reduce tailpipe emissions and fuel usage. However, a host of other equipment features have been specified on new vehicle purchases or installed locally on many of Iowa's transit vehicles with the

intent of reducing fuel use, exhaust emissions, loss of air conditioning refrigerant and drive train wear. Listed below are examples of such "environment friendly" items being purchased to "raise the bar" by a number of transit agencies:

- Radial tires
- Tire pressure monitoring and equalization valves
- Synthetic engine, transmission, and differential lubricants
- Freon recycling equipment and conversion to R134a refrigerant
- Aerodynamic nose caps on 400 plus cutaway van chassis light duty buses
- Light Emitting Diode (LED) use in lieu of incandescent lighting
- Verification of new vehicle front- end alignment and wheel balance

One particularly promising initiative that Iowa's departments of Education and Natural Resources are co-sponsoring has been implemented to minimize pupil exposure to engine exhaust emissions. This program is aptly named the Bus Emissions Education Program (BEEP). Roughly 20% of the states school buses are the primary focus of this environmental initiative. However, a number of Iowa's public transit vehicles that regional transit agencies use in providing pupil transportation services and one urban system's buses are being tested as well under this program. As a result of exhaust monitoring performed under BEEP, participating transit agencies and school districts have been able to identify vehicles that require engine repairs. Repairs



**"...My staff takes great pride in knowing that the innovative fuels and equipment used by our buses reduce emissions so markedly".**

**Bill Hoekstra  
FST&P Director**

prompted by BEEP diagnostics have contributed to exhaust emissions reductions and increased fuel economy of some 1500 vehicles across the state. It is hoped that participation in BEEP will also assist transit agencies and school districts reduce in-service breakdowns and road-calls, thus improving service safety and cost effectiveness.

The last measure we should cite is exemplified by OPT's staff efforts to promote information sharing between parties responsible for implementing these initiatives at various transit agencies. We hope that these articles have contributed, as well, to public awareness about these environmental initiatives and will result in suggestions to

the staff of Iowa's public transit agencies for considering other measures that hold some prospect of achieving tangible environmental benefits.

Implementation of SF545 and other measures noted in this article have increased the demand for Iowa's farm products while improving air quality. Moreover, Bill Hoekstra, FST&P Director, captures another intangible reason for taking these measures when he remarked recently that "...My staff takes great pride in knowing that the innovative fuels and equipment used by our buses reduce emissions so markedly".

For further information about Iowa Transit Systems' Environmental Initiatives, contact J.P. Golinvaux, Procurement Specialist for the Office of Public Transit at 515-233-7879 or by e-mail at [joseph.golinvaux@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:joseph.golinvaux@dot.iowa.gov).

## DHHS test standards may soon affect transit

**O**n April 13, 2004 the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) established standards for determining the validity of urine specimens collected under the Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs. These standards were published in the Federal Register and were created to ensure that testing and reporting procedures are uniformly applied to all federal agency urine specimens when a validity test is conducted.

Revisions include, among other things, definitions, testing requirements, reporting requirements, clarification of Medical Review Officer qualifications and responsibilities, donor challenge procedures and expansion of the existing performance testing and laboratory inspection programs.

Although the Mandatory Guidelines from DHHS are established only for the testing of federal safety-sensitive employees, and not local transit employees, USDOT tends to follow their lead and incorporate similar provisions in their testing rules.

Consequently, the U.S. DOT is expected to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking this fall that incorporates these provisions into Title 49 Part 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This will make the DOT rule consistent with the Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs. The new standards become effective Nov. 1, 2004.

### List of certified labs continues to shrink

The list of laboratories certified by the Department of Health and Human Services is published during the first week of each month in the Federal Register. The notice is also available on the Internet at <http://workplace.samhsa.gov>. Any laboratories for which certification has been suspended or revoked or which have voluntarily withdrawn from the program are highlighted.

The list continues to shrink, reflecting corporate mergers, consolidations and voluntary withdrawals. New validity and adulterant testing requirements may result in a further reduction of the number of labs that are willing and certified to perform urine drug testing for federal agencies. Currently, forty-nine laboratories are on the list - less than half the number certified in the mid-1990s.

Even though the number of labs has diminished, the overall capacity of the remaining labs still exceeds the demand and, thus, no employer should experience any adverse consequences due to the reduction. However, employers must remain diligent in their oversight to ensure that the lab that is providing their drug testing services maintains its DHHS certification and is able to provide test results within the regulatory time limitations

*Information for this article obtained from: FTA Drug and Alcohol Regulation **Updates***

## Affordable transportation around the clock

**A** new ramp-accessible minivan is now available 24 hours a day for people using motorized wheelchairs and other mobility devices in the Cedar Rapids area. On the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a new service was "rolled-out" as the result of several months of planning by the Coalition to Augment the Bus System (CABS) Task Force in Cedar Rapids. The task force was comprised of representatives from local and county government, and transit users from the private sector.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception for the new taxi service was attended by representatives from the Federal Transit Administration, Iowa Department of Transportation and other state and local agencies that helped to fund the project. Congressman Jim Leach, and Mayor Paul Pate and Supervisor Lu Barron were also in atten-

dance. Federal, state, and local dollars, both public and private, were used to develop the new service, which will be operated by Bridget White, owner of Century Cab.

The minivan, a 2004 Braun modified, ramp access, Chevrolet Venture, was purchased by Five Seasons Transportation & Parking (FST&P) with federal and local dollars and provided to Century Cab, under contract, to provide accessible taxi service. The vehicle will operate during FST&P's normal fixed-route service hours, as well as providing after-hours service. Bill Hoekstra, FST&P's Director, said, "This service represents one of the last missing pieces to a seamless transportation delivery system in the community".

For more information on accessing this service, call Century Cab at 319-365-0505.



Accessible taxi "rolls out" in Cedar Rapids.

## City of Bettendorf upgrades existing fleet

The Transit Division of the Bettendorf Public Works Department recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony for their six new ABC-branded M1030 buses with Ricon “in-step” lifts. In attendance were officials from the city, as well as staff members and representative of various transit systems and related organizations.

The buses were purchased using Federal Transit Administration dollars from Section 5307 grants and will replace the city’s existing fleet of 176-inch light-duty buses that reached over twice their existing life cycle. Bettendorf Transit was able to purchase all six buses at once, by saving and maintaining the capital grant money from four different 5307 grants. Matt



Bettendorf Transit takes delivery of six new 30-foot buses.

Simaytis, Bettendorf Transit Manager, said, “Bettendorf Transit was able to do this by having adequate funding available for preventive maintenance, and having a maintenance program in place that kept the old fleet in good

working condition.” The Bettendorf Transit System currently operates five bus routes within the city.

The new 30-foot buses are ADA accessible and configured for 27 passengers or 18 passengers with two wheel-

chairs aboard. “Passengers in the city of Bettendorf are enjoying the new, larger vehicles thanks to the federal funding,” said Simaytis.

### STA formula, from page 2

public. They examined the methods other states and the federal government use to allocate transit assistance funding under various programs.

Committee members also discussed concerns that various parties have raised concerning the current formula. These include issues like the share of funding going to urban versus regional transit systems, lack of any actual measure of service in the formula, too much emphasis on efficiency which may discourage expansion of services for persons with disabilities or special job access services, too much

emphasis on miles which may favor rural service over urban service, scarcity issues, shifts in ability to access federal assistance, and groupings that don’t recognize system differences.

As a result of all these discussions, the committee established a set of principles for examination of specific alternatives to the current formula. They felt the alternatives should:

1. maintain “performance” as the basis for funding,
2. put an emphasis on actual service levels,
3. keep an emphasis on local financial support,

4. de-emphasize efficiency without eliminating it as a factor, and
5. consider access to federal funds when allocating the state funds.

The committee analyzed 25 formula alternatives in six general categories. The committee chose to analyze the alternatives using hypothetical statistics, so that the participants wouldn’t be biased based on how their individual system would do under a particular alternative.

As a result of the committee input, DOT is considering a possible change in the STA distribution formula. The alternative that was discussed

with IPTA would base funding distribution 25% on rides provided, 25% on miles of revenue service, 30% on local financial support and 10% each on the ridership efficiency and mileage efficiency factors, with a built-in adjustment for access to federal transit assistance funding.

The transit systems were asked to comment on the issue. A decision to recommend a change or not is expected to be made by the end of the year. If a change is recommended, it will involve an administrative rule change with another public input process in early spring.

## Vilsack's fifth annual "Walk Iowa"

**G**overnor Tom Vilsack recently completed his fifth annual walking tour of Iowa communities. He began Sunday, Sept. 26, in Grinnell and spent four days walking through 13 Iowa communities to visit with Iowans. His route took him through Marengo, Ladora, Durant, Stockton, Walcott, Marshalltown, Albion, Liscomb, Union, Estherville and Storm Lake. He completed the tour on Wednesday, Sept. 29, in Alta. The Governor was joined by members of the general public in his walk.

At each stop Governor Vilsack planted a tree. Also, at several stops along the way, Vilsack presented the community with an "Iowa Shines" award in recognition of their outstanding efforts toward making Iowa a great place to live, work and raise a family. Iowa commemorative quarter sets were also on sale for \$5 at all locations, with proceeds benefiting the Terrace Hill Foundation.

"Every year, my walking tour gives me a wonderful opportunity to hear from Iowans all across the state in their own communities," Vilsack said. "The stops along the tour let me meet in person with Iowans to hear about their thoughts, concerns, suggestions and insights for the future of our state."

### **IPTA**, from page 7

Iowa transit systems.

Jerry Fitzgerald, IPTA's legislative consultant at the state level made a short presentation to the membership as well. Fitzgerald provided his perspective on the upcoming session and helped IPTA facilitate consensus building of the transit-related issues. A partial list of legislative candidates was distributed specifically identifying names of legislative candidates that are new so that transit managers can make a concerted effort to introduce themselves at the local level and provide an

awareness of transit issues early on.

A final milestone established by the legislative committee, is to evaluate the effectiveness of the FY2005 strategies and develop recommendations for FY2006 for presentation to the full IPTA membership at its annual meeting next June. "We are striving to speak with one voice, sharing a common vision with clear and specific priorities that will best benefit the industry as a whole," said Munson.

## Transit training library Feature Training

**Information Please . . .**

**F**or this issue I would like to provide you with information on how to access information from the National Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) Training Resource Web site. The first step is to go to the Web site: [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org). Take some time to see what they have to offer on their homepage, which also has good links to other sites and up-to-date information on additional subjects.

Okay, are you ready to find some great training material? After arriving at [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org) click on "National RTAP Training Resource Catalog." From there you can click on either "Search/Edit Materials" or you can go directly to "Materials Report." If you have an idea of what type of training you are looking for, I would suggest going to "Search/Edit Materials." Here you can search by a variety of types: Resource Name, Resource Type, Subject, Date, Author, Contact Agency or Keyword. If you leave the search criteria blank you will get a listing of all the materials available (which also happens if you go directly to "Materials Report").

Some of the training materials listed are free and some are available for a small fee. There are 10 major search categories for training:

General Transit	Transit Planning and Design
Transit Legislation	Transit Ridesharing
Transit Maintenance	Transit Safety
Transit Marketing	Transit Small & Urban Cities
Transit Operations	Transit Vehicles

Be aware before you print out the resources catalog – there are more than 390 pages of resource material available! I hope you will have some time to check out the Web site at [www.nationalrtap.org](http://www.nationalrtap.org) and see all they have to offer.

The Office of Public Transit has a large selection of training resources to loan at no charge to public transit systems and other passenger transportation providers. To borrow these publications or videos call Donna Johnson, 515-233-7875, or e-mail your request to [donna.johnson@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:donna.johnson@dot.iowa.gov).

**Watch our next issue for articles about recipients of Iowa awards during 2004, such as: System of the Year, FTA's special recognition awards, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Bus Rodeo competition. It doesn't stop here. Iowa is also receiving recognition at the national level. Don't miss our next issue!**

# 2004-2005

## October

Oct. 24-27, Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Conference for Rural & Intercity Bus Transportation, Roanoke, Va. (For more information contact TRB 202-334-2966.)

Oct. 31 – Nov. 3, Bus Equipment and Maintenance/Procurement and Materials Management Workshop, Anaheim, Calif. (For more information contact Lurae Stuart, 202-496-4844 or [Istuart@apta.com](mailto:Istuart@apta.com).)

Oct. 31 – Nov. 4, National Association for Pupil Transportation annual conference, Cincinnati, Ohio (For more information contact Michael Martin at 800-989-6278, ext. 103 or [martin@napt.org](mailto:martin@napt.org).)

## November

Nov. 9, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, Iowa

Nov. 11, Veterans Day, DOT offices closed

Nov. 18-20, Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Conference for Research on Women's Transportation Issues, Chicago, Ill. (For more information contact Sandi Rosembloom 505-623-0003 or [rosenblo@u.arizona.edu](mailto:rosenblo@u.arizona.edu).)

Nov. 25-26, DOT offices closed in observance of Thanksgiving

Nov. 30 - Dec. 2, IPTA mid-year meeting, Clive Hotel, Clive, Iowa (For more information contact Bev Thomas at 515-440-6057.)

## December

Dec. 14, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, Iowa

Dec. 24, DOT offices closed in observance of Christmas

Dec. 31, DOT offices closed in observance of New Year's Day

## January

Jan. 9, TRB 84<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, Washington, D.C. (For more information contact Linda Karson 202-334-2934 or [lkarson@nas.edu](mailto:lkarson@nas.edu).)

Jan. 11, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, Iowa

Jan. 17, DOT offices closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. birthday

## February

Feb. 8, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, Iowa

## March

Mar. 8, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, Iowa

For more detailed conference listings see the following Web sites:  
<http://www.apta.com/meetings>  
 (conferences and calendar)

<http://www.ctaa.org/events> (CTAA calendar of events)

<http://www.ctaa.org/training> (CTAA training calendar)

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/11053\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/11053_ENG_HTML.htm)  
 (calendar of events)

[http://www.fta.dot.gov/2432\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/2432_ENG_HTML.htm)  
 (training and professional development)



CONNECTIONS is a publication of the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit. It is distributed free of charge to public transit systems, agencies providing human service transportation, intercity bus carriers, and other interested individuals and organizations. It is also available on the DOT's Web site.

Please direct comments, stories or story ideas to:  
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Visit our Web site at  
[iatransit.com](http://iatransit.com)

**Our Mission Statement**

"To advocate and deliver services that support and promote a safe and comprehensive transit system in Iowa to enhance Iowans access to opportunities and quality of life."

The staff wishes to thank those who have provided information and reference materials for this newsletter.

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